

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume VI, Number 3

June 2015

Broadband Proposal Approved; Change on Select Board

A SHIFT IN TOWN GOVERNANCE

By Simon Winchester

May was the month our town underwent a sea-change, possibly like never before. This was a month of decisions – historic, unprecedented – that propelled Sandisfield, with scarcely a backward glance, to accelerate herself into the twenty-first century.

The town has now made a full-throated public commitment to bring high-speed internet connectivity to this beautifully isolated corner of the Berkshires.

And we have two brand-new members on a Select Board that, to judge from the initial attitudes of the winning candidates, appears brimful of optimism for the town's future fortunes.

The cascade of change began with the Town Meeting on Saturday

May 16th – a meeting held for the first time, because of the anticipated large audience, in the spacious Route 57 firehouse. More than 140 came. “In all my seventeen years as Town Clerk,” declared Dolores Harasyko, once all were seated and stilled, “I’ve never seen more people at a Town Meeting.”

Of the 76 items on the ballot, 71 related to spending. Most were quite routine. One administrative departure from previous meetings made a great improvement: At the request of an audience member, David Hubbard, a hard-working Finance Committee member, did the math on each item in order to let the audience know, dollar for dollar, how each departmental

Cont'd p.6



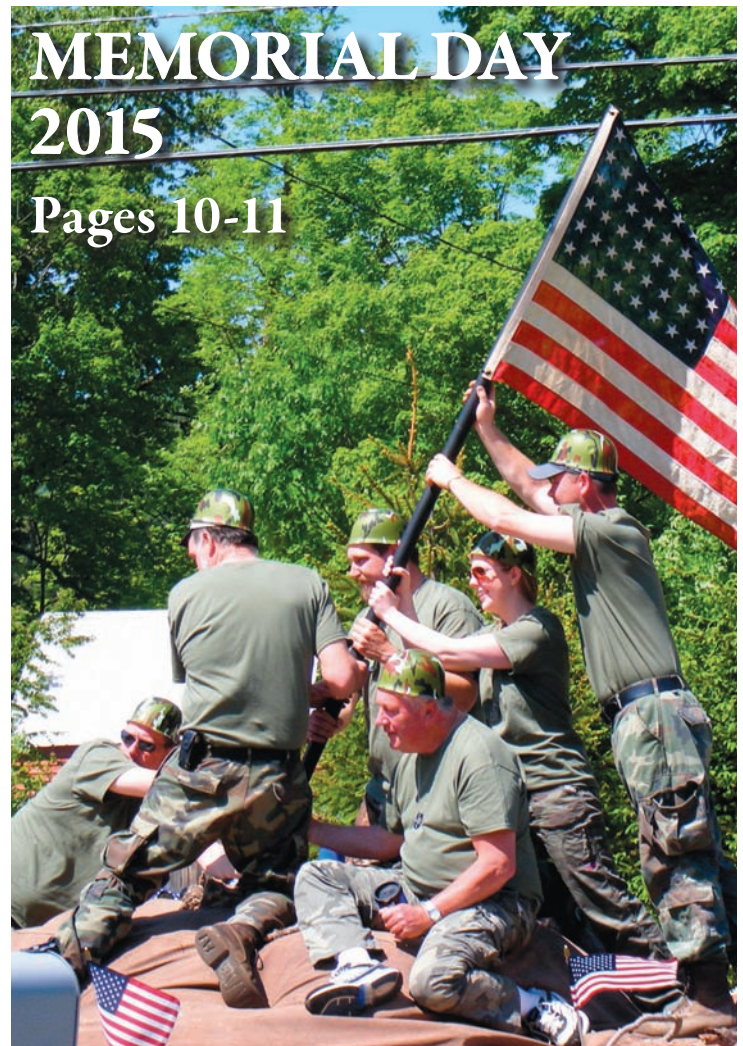
Alice Boyd



Jeff Gray



John Skrip



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Iwo Jima. Photo: Bill Price
 Selectmen: Photos: Alan Boye

A Modest Proposal

WHO SHOULD FIX 57?

By Bill Price

Sandisfield has joined its neighboring town of New Marlborough in a proposal to the Commonwealth.

Many years ago Rt. 57 through Town was a county road with its maintenance the responsibility of the towns along the route. When it became a state road, the state assumed the cost of maintenance. Several years later, the state returned Rt. 57 to the towns in an amendment to the State Constitution that is generally described as the "Home Rule" amendment. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

The route, which carries traffic the width of Sandisfield, chews up a large amount of the Town's road money. But it is in fact a state road.

In March, Chuck Loring of the New Marlborough Department of Public Works contacted Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko to let him know that New Marlborough was presenting a petition for the state to reassume the ownership and maintenance of the roadway. Was Sandisfield willing to join their petition?

Steve presented this idea at the March 30 Select Board meeting. There ensued considerable doubt that the State would consider such a good idea from out here in the West. Selectman Jeff Gray said, "They'll never go for it." Board Chairman Patrick Barrett said, "It wouldn't hurt to ask." It was decided that the idea would have to be presented to voters at Town Meeting.

And so, duly, the idea was presented at Town Meeting on March 16 as Item 75, to wit: "To see if the Town will vote to petition the legislature, under the provisions of Section 8, Article 89 ..." It was written in a legal manner.

The Selectmen explained to the voters what the petition hoped to accomplish. They said the responsibility for maintenance was "given" to the town in the past and perhaps the State would be willing to "take it back, that we didn't like the gift." Moderator John Skrip suggested it was a kind of "re-gifting." The article passed unanimously. ♡



In April, the New Boston Cemetery was cleaned up. Four forgotten tombstones were uncovered as the brush was cleared.

Photo: Bill Price

Where to Put Our Town Center?

By Kathy Jacobs
Chair, Strategic Planning

To determine possible locations for a new Town Hall/Town Center, the Strategic Planning Committee would like to hear from individuals who know of land that may be available.

We believe about 8+ acres with visible road frontage would be ideal. Be advised that this is an informational request and not to be considered an offer to purchase. Much work remains to be done to determine if, when, and where this site will be located.

Please send suggestions to sandisfieldsuggestion-box@gmail.com or bring your ideas to Town Hall Annex. ♡

Center Cemetery Pruning, June 20

The Cemetery Committee has selected June 20, a Saturday, as a Volunteer Pruning Day at the Center Cemetery, 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. All are welcome. Bring pruning tools, saws, gloves.

Committee Chair Kathie Burrows and Cemetery Commissioner Ben Campetti were very pleased with the volunteer turnout and results of the New Boston Cemetery Pruning Day in April. The fence at the New Boston Cemetery was painted by volunteers on Sunday, May 17, in time for the Memorial Day Celebration.

For more information, call Kathie Burrows at 258-4943. ♡



OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



"Bob and the Trees", the feature film directed by **Diego Ongaro** and some talented friends during the winter of 2014 was shown at the Berkshire International Film Festival in Great Barrington on May 30. The film stars local logger **Bob Tarasuk** and his son-in-law, **Matt Gallagher**. It was co-authored by Diego's wife, **Courtney Maum**. ♡

Arts Center Seeks Volunteers

With the 2015 entertainment season at the Sandisfield Arts Center in full swing, volunteers are needed to make sure things run smoothly at every event.

We need assistance in the following areas: lighting, sound, website maintenance, parking, serving refreshments, greeting and checking in attendees at the door, and distributing posters.

Volunteers working at a show see the show for free. To sign up call us at 413-258-4100 or write to us at info@sandisfieldartscenter.org. Check out the lineup of events at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org and let us know how you would like to participate. ♡

NEW Qigong/Tai Chi
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Both classes improve balance, reduce stress and promote overall health - plus they are fun. Come join us!

For info call 413 269 0233, Barb Penn

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

AN APPRECIATION OF PATRICK

When one of the Town's venerable residents told me in March, "Maybe it's time for a change," I thought, "Patrick's re-election is in trouble." After it was all over, Patrick told me, "There is anger and frustration in this community and someone had to be taken to task for it."

But Patrick Barrett should be proud of what he accomplished for the Town and thanked for his hard work and dedication.

He served six years as Selectman, most of them as Board Chairman. For at least two years the Select Board was short one Selectman. Working smoothly with fellow Selectman Jeff Gray, Patrick helped keep the Town in business. For a few months in 2012 it was even more lonely: Patrick was the only Selectman on his feet while Jeff recovered from a mild stroke.

Patrick accepted the slings and arrows of a Selectman at every Monday night meeting and very often when the phone rang at home. He helped the Town make hard decisions and carry them out. He helped oversee the spending of millions of Town dollars, most of them directed to the right place.

But after six years and so much accomplished – and even still more to be done – he was up against two serious candidates. Very likely not even Bill Clinton could have been re-elected in that climate.

Thank you, Patrick.

Broadband

Eventually WiredWest may get here. For now, while it lasts, I'm doing fine with wi-fi over a phone line. But I'll be glad to get wired better.

A story in my family is that when our local Public Utility District in Washington State was stringing electric wire in the late 1930s my grandfather said he didn't need it on his apple orchard. Never had it; didn't need it. But his daughter, my mother, sure as hell told the power company, "String it right up the road there." When the power eventually got up the hill, she plugged in her new Maytag washing machine and laughed at the swish/swash of the paddles.

*Bill Price
West New Boston*



Sandisfield

(for Jo Garfield)

Brazen small,
With five rivers lusting through this old town,
It summons up the lyric in us,
Its quick seasons parading by
Like costumed soldiers ...
You take the stone walls, for example.
They come all kinds: Irish motley, British neat.
There are no proper sidewalks or even proper streets.
But behind our unlocked doors
The conversation moves from God to apple picking,
Thomas Thumb to Thomas More.
It is a town with no beginning,
No middle and no end ... but we pretend
A beautiful and wicked place to spend
Our lives.
I have come to love it.
I see cathedrals in my nave of trees,
Paris in my daffodils,
And hear Mozart in the summer breeze.

*Val Coleman
Town Hill Road*

Election Results, March 18, 2015

As Reported by Town Clerk

Election official Dolores Harasyko reported that 53 percent of registered voters cast ballots in the May election, a very high percentage, and that the Town Meeting two days earlier, attended by 124 registered voters and at least 20 other residents, was one of the largest Town Meetings in her 17 years as Town Clerk.

Of 295 votes cast:

Selectman, 1-year term

Alice Boyd	223
Victor Hryckvich . . . . .	.65
Others	2
Blanks	5

Selectman, 3-year term

Patrick Barrett . . . . .	.90
Brian O'Rourke . . . . .	.60
John Skrip	137
Blanks	8

Moderator

Jean Atwater-Williams	231
Others	5
Blanks . . . . .	.59

Auditor

Ralph Morrison	210
Others	8

Board of Assessors

Kathleen Burrows	245
Blanks . . . . .	.50

School Committee

Sandra Snyder	247
Blanks . . . . .	.48

Board of Health

Margaret O'Clair.	250
Blanks . . . . .	.45

Planning Board

Tom Jacobs	229
Blanks . . . . .	.66

Constable

John Burrows.	246
Others	1
Blanks . . . . .	.48

Ballot Question: To override Proposition 2 ½ the amounts required to pay for bonds to be issued to fund the town's share of a regional broadband network.

Yes	189
No . . . . .	.91
Blanks . . . . .	.15

Bridges, Bridges

In the south of Town, teams from J.H. Maxymillian, project managers for Mass DOT, are completing construction work on two bridges across the Farmington.

The replacement work on the Route 8 bridge across the Farmington is scheduled to be finished by the end of June. Travellers will continue to slow down to maneuver through a one-way lane across the existing bridge until the work is finished.

Work that has gone on most of the winter is about finished on a new one-lane bridge across the Farmington at Clark Road in Roosterville. The bridge leads to Willard Platt's house and all winter Willard used a temporary bridge parallel to get across the river. The new bridge was completed at the end of May. Maxymillian will keep its headquarters trailer on Roosterville Road until their Rt. 8 bridge assignment is completed.



Bed for Rent But Hold the Breakfast AN ISSUE OF FAIRNESS?

By Bill Price

Airbnb, an internet website, connects homeowners who want to rent out a room with travelers who want a place to stay. Rentals are for a day or a week or more and are more than likely less expensive than full-service inns. That's all to the good for travelers and homeowners alike.

According to recent news reports, Airbnb, created only 5 years ago, now lists over a million rooms and homes worldwide. Of that million, as of this report, six or so are located right here in Sandisfield.

"That," says Board of Health Chairman Margaret O'Clair, "creates an issue of fairness." Margaret said the Board of Health has no problem with people renting out rooms and is glad they have the opportunity.


But licensed bed & breakfasts like the Hillside Garden Inn and the New Boston Inn pay license fees to the Town, however minimal, and the businesses have a host of tax and insurance

regulations because they serve food.

No regulations are required to operate an Airbnb and, in Sandisfield, where there are at most three eating establishments, it would be a kindness on the part of the host to serve their guests something to eat.

But what happens if the host serves breakfast?

"If the host serves food," Margaret said, "should not the kitchen be inspected as would any other inn?"


The issues of a sense of fairness and health inspection have been discussed at Board of Health meetings. The BOH is of the opinion that an Airbnb, regardless of size, is a business activity and leaves licensed businesses at a disadvantage. On March 30, Margaret took those concerns to the weekly Select Board meeting. The Selectmen thanked the BOH chairman for bringing this issue to their attention. 

Shakespeare in Sandisfield, June 27-28

The Sandisfield Players begin their 4th year as a community-based group with a two-day mini-celebration of William Shakespeare.

Under the artistic direction of Ben Luxon, the group will expand its theatrical range performing with scripts in hand several of the works of the Bard, including MacBeth, King Lear, and As You Like It. Saturday evening, June 27, 7 p.m.

Sunday afternoon, June 28 at 3 p.m., the group will perform an abridged version of Midsummer Night's Dream.

Both performances: \$15, or \$5 under 12. 

Conservation Corner

LOGGING – FORESTRY IT'S ALL THE SAME, RIGHT? NO!

By Bob Tarasuk

Consulting Forester, License #295

Silviculture – is the Art and Science of growing trees for maximum production, biological diversity, and the long-term benefits of sustainable use of forest products, such as lumber, firewood, maple syrup, among others.

Forestry – is understanding the needs of trees with relation to soil nutrients, water, and sunlight requirements in order to grow the highest yields of vigorous, healthy trees.

Many of us own property with forests, brooks, wetlands, fields, rivers, and lakes. We have different objectives and decisions as land-owners, as stewards of our natural resources.

The most common objectives landowners think about and desire are the following:

- Growing trees
- Wildlife Habitat
- Recreation
- Vistas
- Aesthetics

While there are many other objectives, those mentioned require the cutting of trees to reach personal goals. Logging is the tool to accomplish these objectives.

You must thin trees to grow trees or the productivity of the forest declines. If you want to help wildlife – especially rare species like our Native New England Cottontail Rabbit (not the Eastern Cottontail Rabbit which is abundant) – you need to cut trees. New England Rabbits require habitat

that is very young to have any chance to come back and survive.

Recreation: hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding. All need trees to be cut to make trails. Vistas: logging is essential to creating views and overlooks in strategic places to capture beautiful views and to observe wildlife.

Of course, there is another type of logging. Indiscriminate harvesting of trees to maximize income, or cutting just high-grade trees looking only for short-term gains without regard for any of the objectives listed above.

Most of us have seen this in our lives, and it has confused the difference between forestry and logging and logging without forestry. As a property owner it is your right to liquidate your forest asset for short-term gain. It is important, however, to know this is what you are doing well before it is done.

Many silvicultural practices can be applied that can result in a heavy harvest and maximize income, but yet still keep the forest productive over the long term.

Private Berkshire forests are predominantly mature forests, and in many cases have been managed for the last 50 years and are extremely productive. Very little management over this period included the needs for wildlife that require early succession vegetation (young growth) to have the food they need to survive. Many species need different age classes of forests to have the food and shelter they need to survive.

Today there are state and federal programs that are cost-sharing and sometimes fully-funded management that provides this critical habitat.

If you own land and want to learn what your opportunities and alternatives are, start with the State Service Forester for our area. That individual will help you make choices for your land that include the different objectives that are most important to you. Google the Mass Division of Conservation and Recreation to locate your service forester. The service is free. They'll come out and spend time with you getting you the answers and guidance you need to get the most out of your forest. ♡

Shopping Locally in Sandisfield

This fox was photographed on Rt. 57 at Shade Road trotting home with supper for the kits.

Photo: Richard Migot, late April.





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Broadband Approved; Selectboard Changes

Cont'd from p.1

request for with last year's – and so voters' questions (Why \$1,375 more for street lighting? Why \$400 more for mowing? Why a drop of \$2,066 in the Fire Department's expenses?) were more focused and dealt with more swiftly.

The day's sole setback was for Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko's request that the Town buy his department a new \$191,000 ten-wheel dump truck which would have served double-duty as a snow plow. The Town didn't exactly say no. Rather, it tabled the motion, formed a committee, and postponed debate until next time. But the Road Superintendent, who worked long and hard through the bitterest of winters and now has only three working trucks at his disposal, could do little more than grin bravely and cross his fingers for better weather next year.

Then came Article 71, and the motion that accompanied it: the reason for the huge turnout and all the attendant fuss, as well as for at least two years of headlines in this newspaper, the postcards in the mail, the signs by the roadside: the WiredWest proposal. In summary, it was all "to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$2,400,000 for ... the construction ... of a regional broadband network."

Jean Atwater-Williams, chairman of the Town's Technology Committee and virtual godmother of the project, stood to speak. The crowd hushed. The town constable stood tall, looking for any argument that might get out of hand. There was much tension in the air.

The Motion to allow the borrowing of so much money – more than two-thirds of our total annual budget – needed by coincidence a two-thirds majority to pass. No one was sure the measure would have that much support. For

weeks people in pro and con camps had been nervously counting their supporters. Often it had looked too close to call. Sandisfield might well fail in its bid. It's difficult to get two-thirds vote for anything. Our town might well end up being isolated, left like Tom Joad's rusting jalopy on the side of the high-speed freeway.

But, to universal surprise, it was quite the opposite. There turned out to be hardly any spoken opposition at all.

Just one brave voter, Paul Gaudette, stood to denounce the proposal, saying that wi-fi via telephone was perfectly good enough for him, and that anyway the whole plan smacked of ObamaCare. The ObamaCare comment unleashed a loud chorus of boos and hisses – but to his credit Mr. Gaudette stood his ground, defiant, and rather magnificent. Norman Rockwell could have painted him, Sandisfield free speech personified, his right to utter his words here respected and guaranteed. Only one other voter joined Mr. Gaudette in raising a contrary hand. Other opponents didn't bother to vote.

The motion thus passed overwhelmingly, by an uncounted more than 100 votes to two. There was an eruption of shouts of delight from a crowd who clearly felt that with this vote Sandisfield had turned a corner and was now heading toward a more certain and possibly more prosperous future.


The elections two days later tended to underline and confirm the shift. 295 voters trudged to Old Town Hall, amounting to 53 percent of registered voters – it has seldom been more. (See the numbers, page 3.)

For a one-year term on the Select Board, Alice Boyd, a skilled and highly professional fundraiser, decisively knocked Victor Hryckvich out of the running. A third candidate, Martin Clark, running as a write-in, withdrew before the election and offered his support to Ms. Boyd.

For a three-year term, Patrick Barrett, after six years of patient service to the Select Board, had his hopes for a third term upended by John Skrip. Mr. Skrip, the amiable Town Moderator, is a retired chemistry teacher with a penchant for details and a promise – or threat – for endless availability and presence at Town Hall. Brian O'Rourke, a local home builder, finished in third place.

The new Selectmen join Jeff Grey for – the first time in months – a fully staffed Select Board.

The sole remaining question on the ballot related to the internet: a proposition to exempt the possible \$2.4 million of borrowings from the town budget's normal restrictions. The motion passed by a large majority. Had it failed, all the euphoria of the Town Meeting would have been for naught.

But as it happened there was jubilation in many quarters of our community late into the night of May 18th – a date which may go down in Sandisfield's history as one to remember. And, most suitably, one that occurred in the middle of the merry month of May. 

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Cultural Council

By John Skrip

GRANTS AWARDED BY CULTURAL COUNCIL

This Spring the Sandisfield Cultural Council announced 14 grants totaling over \$4,000 to local individuals and organizations. The local council supports public programs that promote access, education, diversity, and excellence in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences in communities.

GRANT RECIPIENTS FOR 2015 WERE:

- Adam Brown, Music from a Bygone Era
- CHP, Native Family Fun Farmington River Regional School, two grants: A Berkshire Theatre production and a trip to Howe Caverns

- Judy Lander, Hancock Village
- Kenly Brozman, Gala Performance
- Mt. Everett FFA, The Art of Spinning and Felting
- Roberta Sarnacki, Kops-N-Kids
- Samantha Farella, Hancock Village
- Sandisfield Free Library, Find Your Roots
- Sculpture Now, Hands on Sculpture
- Thomas Nodolny, three grants: Nature's Classroom; a presentation at the Mahaiwe Theatre; a presentation at the Colonial Theatre.

Council members include John Skrip (chairman), Peter Levine, Anina Carr, and Rosanne Carinci-Hoekstra. The council meets three times a year. Please consider becoming a member. To do so, speak to any council member about volunteering. Call John at 413-258-4788 for more information. The next meeting date is scheduled for May 20 at the Sandisfield Library, 7 p.m. You don't have to be a council member to attend. ♡



Solar panels were installed in May.
Photo: Patricia Hubbard

I need to share my excitement with neighbors and friends.

You too may be eligible to have solar panels installed, at no cost and no income requirements, just like I did. Now that the panels have been installed on my roof at 140 Silverbrook Road, let the sun shine brightly!

Last winter I heard about Solar City, a company that sells and leases solar panels. They lease for roofs only – not field panels.

The best part is that if you lease you do not pay for the panels or the installation. And you don't pay a lease fee, either. You simply pay for the number of kilowatt hours you use. Solar City monitors the system and provides service crews. They own the equipment and take care of repairs.

If you generate more electricity than you need at a particular time of year, the excess is metered to Eversource where it is "stored" for you and when you need it during darker periods it's credited back to you. If you look at the top half of your current electric bill you'll see a charge for delivery services and the back of the bill gives you the breakdown of those services. With solar you eliminate that entire category!

I encourage everyone who is concerned about the cost of electricity and the environment to look into this opportunity. I don't know much more about this whole thing, but I'm willing to share what I know with you. Give me a call at 258-4498. Or you can visit www.solarcity.com/residential.

Here's to a sunny day! ♡

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER



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june

In the Gallery
JUNE 6 - 28
Paintings by Steve Balkin
Opening Reception SAT, JUNE 6 2-4 PM

SAT, JUNE 6 8 PM
Andy Wrba and the Rotten Apples

SAT, JUNE 13 10 AM
Dr. Evers Whyte: New Hope for Chronic Pain - An Integrative Approach

SAT, JUNE 13 8 PM
Common Thread

SAT, JUNE 27 7 PM
SUN, JUNE 28 3 PM
An Exploration of William Shakespeare's Works with the Sandisfield Players!

Funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and Local Cultural Councils

Walt Whitman and Charley Fidler

By Val Coleman

On Saturday, April 25 at four o'clock in the afternoon, a brief and rhapsodic hour stunned a small audience upstairs at the Sandisfield Arts Center.

Charles Fidler sailed with Walt Whitman through the 19th Century ... with great patches of lyric free verse, powerful prose elegies, and a touching narrative of Whitman's life that embraced the great celebratory "Leaves of Grass" and the man himself, shining through his critics and making patriotism a proper dream.

I don't remember anything quite like it ... we usually listen stoically to poetry, particularly in Berkshire "readings" ... but for a few moments on this Spring Saturday, the ravishing verse of probably American's greatest poet became a consoling celebration of life itself. ♡



"Heritage Hero" Cited by Select Board

Earlier this year, the Sandisfield Historical Commission announced that property owners and others who have significantly helped to preserve the integrity of the Town's heritage under certain guidelines would be publicly recognized. The first homeowners to receive this acknowledgement, Michael and Patti Wittkowski of Long Island, were acknowledged by the Select Board on May 26. The Wittkowski's have carefully renovated the early 19th century Theophilus Hubbard House on remote East Hubbard Road in the northwest section of town. A report on what they've done with the house will be in the next issue of *The Times*.

From left, Selectmen Alice Boyd and Jeff Gray, Award Winner Michael Wittkowski, Ron Bernard and Kathie Burrows of the Historical Commission, and Selectman John Skrip.

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The Campetti family reunion at Otis Reservoir, Summer 2014.

Special Letter to the Editor

WHEN PETE'S WAS STEVE'S

From Theresa Campetti Koszalka, Otis

When I was told about an upcoming article on my brother, Steve Campetti, to be published in The Sandisfield Times, I was excited to have him remembered. After reading it, I was disappointed. As his only living sister, I have very different memories of my "big brother" and the store. It was difficult for me to read this article based on someone's memories, even though posted as "possibly flawed." I am sure they were well intended. I am glad the author had fond memories of my brother. I felt it was necessary to write an article that put our family history in the correct perspective.

The Campetti family is very much alive, although we are now living all over the country. We are still a large family that stays in touch with each other and celebrates annually at Dolly's cottage on Otis Reservoir. The family history began when my father, Dominick, arrived in this country from Italy in the early 1900's and settled in Sandisfield a few years later.

He started out as a logger along with his wife Catherine. Along the way they had seven children, starting with my sisters Dolly, Mary, and Pete and then the three boys Steve, Jappy, and Tuffy. I was the baby, Theresa. The farm in Roosterville was started when my four older siblings began school.

In 1940, Steve and Mary bought the New Boston Store. When Steve entered the military service, Mary was in charge with a little help from me – a 14-year-old. Steve returned and they continued to run the store and post office together. A few years later, he married Zoa Pratt. They lived over the store until moving to Stockbridge with Steve commuting to New Boston. My memories of the store were similar in that it was a meeting place for people to pick up their mail, get caught up on local news, and buy a few supplies while they were there. There was always a welcoming smile and hello. Steve had many great friends. I remember my brother as being a quiet man who did many things for the town that were never spoken. He was generous and always there to help out.

After Steve and Mary retired they sold the store to Peter and Susan Murray. Susan is Jappy's oldest daughter. They continued to run the store until the truck accident damaged it so badly in 2012. 🍷

2015 Winsted Fire Department Engine #4

BLASS BLAST Pig Roast

June 6, 2015 3 PM

at M.J.Tuckers, Sandisfield

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Photos: Tom Jacobs



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The Fire Department and the American Legion thank everyone who participated in this year's parade.



historia (Greek) - "inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation" The discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events.

1939 TRIBUTE TO JULIUS MINERY APPROPRIATE TODAY

By Ron Bernard

Bob Minery of Cold Spring Road, died March 22 at 82. His obituary and a remembrance were published here last month.

In 1939 when Bob was 7, his father, Julius, also a life-long Sandisfield farmer, was fatally injured in questionable circumstances while making his way back home following a long day of haying. Left behind were his wife Marion and eight children.

One of Minery's neighbors in the Beech Plain happened to be George Sokolsky, a nationally-famous journalist and radio broadcaster who, no question, was Sandisfield's most prominent person in the 20th century.

From the early 1930s until his death in 1962, Sokolsky had access to US presidents and senators, to kings and potentates, to movie stars and studio executives. At his funeral in New York City the honorary pallbearers included former President Herbert Hoover, General Douglas MacArthur, and Attorney General Robert Kennedy representing his brother, the President. You get the idea.

Sokolsky's columns were carried by some 350 newspapers. He covered politics and important cultural issues of the day. His words were plain-spoken. Sokolsky told it like he saw it, and he pulled no punches.

Which gets us to the reason for this introduction. For almost 30 years until his death Sokolsky was a seasonal resident on North Beech Plain Road, the historic and colorful, c.1767 Lt. Ichabod Crittendon place, an early tavern, later known as the "Amen Farm." Sandisfield was a place where Sokolsky could brush shoulders with unpretentious working people and aspire to be their equal. He learned a lot from those he might have called "real Americans" who held traditional values like hard work, honesty, independence, sacrifice, and community pride. He loved to write about his neighbors such as his friend, Julius Minery.

Two weeks after Julius' tragedy, Sokolsky's eloquent tribute to him appeared in newspapers all over the country. The Times is reprinting that tribute here, in full, in honor of my neighbor, Bob, to his father Julius, and to George Sokolsky, their neighbor and friend. ♣

A Connecticut Yankee

By George E. Sokolsky

August 14, 1939

My neighbor, Julius Minery, was killed the other night by an automobile. It was late, past 11 at night, they say. Minery had been mowing hay all day, and he had left his wagon behind, but he and his horse were on their way home. In fact, two or three minutes more would have seen them both on our dirt road and Minery would have been alive.

A simple, honest Yankee was Julius Minery. He came into these parts from Connecticut sometime after the war, in which he had been a soldier. He came with his wife and many children - there were eight of them when he died - his two big hands and a stout heart.

At first he lived in a shack off near the Nudist Camp. He and his children all lived there in independent poverty. Minery worked out as a handy man. He had a horse and the simple implements of a primitive

farmer. He plowed, he harrowed, he mowed, he cleaned out the manure - he did everything. He and his horse worked from early morning to late at night. He worked for everybody - \$5 a day for man and horse and no favors asked or given.

During the depression years many of our boys went on relief, CCC camps, work- on the road, WPA, flood control - they did about anything but work their farms. But Minery would have none of these. He never asked any man to help support him or his family, and he never would.

When the Surplus Commodity people came through here in their

automobiles distributing grapefruit and oranges and all sorts of fancy goods, most folks took what they could get - even those who could afford to buy. But not Julius Minery.

He would say: "Give it to them as needs this stuff. I'll buy and pay for mine." He always paid cash in the village store and such was his high character that the village store keeper could well be his pall bearer without worrying about his accounts.

As Minery's hard work brought him a bit of capital, he bought some tools. He got a better wagon. He bought some farm machinery. He bought a piece of land down near the river, and he cleared it of pine and brush, and built himself a house.

Three summers ago he began to build the house and this is the second summer that his family has been living in it. But the house is not yet finished.

Julius Minery was building that house with his own hands, except for some rare and occasional help. Many a time I would ask him when it would be completed and painted white, but Minery could not tell me because he always had so much work to do.



Julius Minery providing roadside assistance in the Beech Plain, mid-1930s.

Photo: E.Y. Smith in Sandisfield: An Intimate History (1948).

In his field he had almost no competition, because most of the farmers in these parts had sold their horses and had taken to working for the town. Some of them have automobiles, but few have farm machinery. And when real farming had to be done, Minery had to be hired. For instance, my farmer is a good worker and he has an automobile. But no one has yet discovered how to plow a piece of New England behind an automobile. So every spring, when the frost disappeared, along came Minery with horse and plow and he did it for us. And we shall miss him now that he is gone.

He knew how to use his hands. He could be a carpenter. He could be a plumber. He could be an electrician or a mason. And he charged honestly when one employed him – asking no more and taking no less than was his due.

What went on in his mind most of the time I do not know. For he was not one to talk much. But sometimes we 'would talk about Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues. These would interest him tremendously, and every once in a while he would write away to get some new gadget, which he would put to work as soon as it came. Everything went to work with Minery and he asked no help from the government.

I don't know whether Minery was a Republican or a Democrat. Up

here in these hills, these words mean something different from what they do in the cities. Otis, where he lived, is Republican, but Sandisfield, where I live, on the same road, is Democratic. It all has to do with relief and local town politics. Minery never talked politics to me, but he did raise a howl when the news of the potato act came up here. He said that he would grow all the potatoes he wanted to and that if any one tried to stop him, he might just try.

Minery needed plenty of potatoes for his big family, and no little inspector from Washington was going to tell his children to starve while he could hoe.

Well, Julius Minery is dead. He was on his way home and his horse and he were struck by an automobile driven by a local young man. There were three occupants in the car and they all tell the same story. But nobody can quite understand how it all happened.

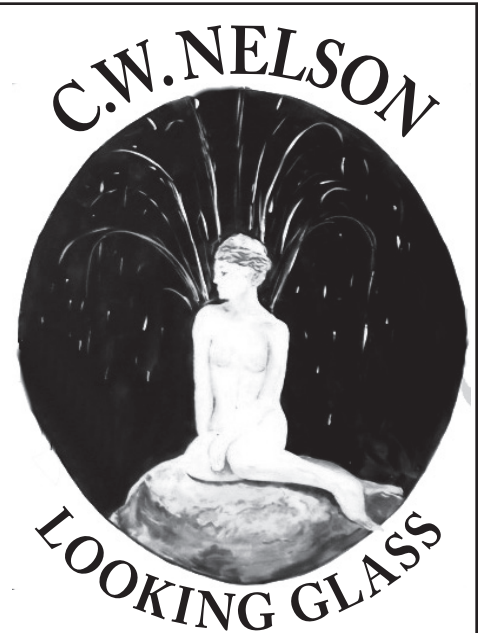
For instance, the road is fairly wide and light and those in a car could see a man and a horse trudging along slowly. So they say that Minery was drunk. Yet, even if a man is drunk, he has a right to walk along the road peacefully to get home to sleep off his tittle. Can automobiles kill people because they are allergic to liquor? Perhaps that question ought to be put to John Lewis.

But the worst of it is that some people say that they saw him shortly before the accident and that he looked and acted sober. Then those involved say that he was on his horse, but when the horse came home, all on its own, its reins were so tied that he could not have been on it. Minery himself did not live long enough to tell his side of the story, but we all showed what we thought of him and it by going to church to see him blessed, and many even traveled down to Connecticut to see him buried.

And so that is the end of my tale of one of the last of the Americans. Like his ancestors, he made his own way. Like them, he cleared the woods and built a house and provided for his children. Like them, he knew his rights and respected those of his neighbors. Like them, he begged of no man, and rejected teasing succor from the government.

Such men built this country from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They gave us our social customs and political institutions. They feared nothing and walked independently. They shook off poverty by the sweat of their bodies and the strength of their hands. No work was too hard or too dirty – because they reveled in their individuality and freedom.

And it was such a man who was killed by a youth in a borrowed automobile.



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Special Letter to the Editor

CCC MYSTERY SOLVED

From Stanley F. Koloski

Valatie, New York

You carried a story in the Jan-Feb issue about the CCC Camp that once existed near York Lake on the Sandisfield State Forest property. You mentioned you would like some information concerning who has been placing the annual wreath on the driveway gate to the old camp.

The wreath has been placed for over seven years by my cousin, Nita Casey of Housatonic, who became a member of the Koloski family through marriage. Nita inherited the wreath-placement task from a former Good Samaritan who became too feeble to continue the effort after having done it for many years.

The reason Nita took on the wreath placement effort is that my late father, Stanley J. Koloski, was a member of the CCC Camp in the early 1930s. He opted out of the trip to Great Barrington with CCC members who were going to church. As a result he was not on one of the three trucks that got into the accident on 3-Mile Hill near Ski Butternut Basin. Had it not been his desire to stay in camp he might have been on the fatal truck.

Some family members feel he stayed in camp so he could walk through the woods to visit Olga Gregoski, who lived on the Gregoski farm on Bosworth Road. He regularly took this walk on a well-beaten path to visit this young lady who became his wife in 1936 and my mother in 1937.

In the early years of their marriage, my parents worked as farm manager and cook for different estates in New Marlborough and Sandisfield. My brother Donald was born and during WWII my father worked for GE in Pittsfield. We moved back to Sandisfield after the war, where we lived in the old Atwater house at the top of Sandisfield Hill for many years. My two sisters, Ann and Susan, were born while the family lived there.

...EVEN MORE TO THIS CCC STORY

By Ron Bernard

Mr. Koloski is responding to my column article, "Ceremony Memorializes Victims of 1934 CCC Accident" (Sandisfield Times, January-February, 2015; available in archives on the website, www.SandisfieldTimes.org).

It is heart-warming to know that that caring people continue to honor these victims. Mr. Koloski mentions that his family continued a tradition begun by a "Good Samaritan."

Since my story appeared, another news article on the same topic was discovered which probably connects the thread. On Dec. 27, 1992, The Berkshire Eagle carried the account of a previous anonymous wreath-layer. Robert Chase, a retiree who lived at the historic Dr. Amos Smith House on lower New Hartford Road, was an active member of the Sandisfield Historical Society. He explained that he was the one who quietly placed a wreath at this monument every December between about 1971 and at least through 1992. (The Chase property was sold in 1998.)

He told the reporter, "Some years ago, in the early 1970s, as I was driving south on Sandy Brook Turnpike with a friend, we noticed a small opening in the forest on the east side just below the turnoff from York Lake. We saw a large white stone at the end of the pathway. We walked in and found the five names carved into stone. Soon afterward we asked some members of the Sandisfield Historical Society about it, and were told the story of the accident."

Mr. Chase concluded, "In the Christmas season, the monument looked so forlorn, and we decided to place a wreath on it in memory of those nice guys who worked so hard to better our environment, and each year I have placed a wreath on the white stone."

I'm now wondering if there were even earlier wreath-layers. If you know or wish for any reason to reach anyone involved with the CCC memorial at York Lake, contact me at editor@sandisfieldtimes.org or write to: Sandisfield Times, PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255. 📧

Council on Aging



By Susan Galik

So the Elder Lawyer, Mr. Wolf, bagged us. His excuse ... blah, blah, blah. His visit has been rescheduled for June 3, Wednesday. Luncheon available for you first, and then Mr. Wolf can answer our questions at 12:30 p.m.

June 10, we will hold a training session for care givers at the Community Health Program in Great Barrington. 8:30 until 4 p.m. Topics will cover safety concerns, personal care, help with

daily activities, and socialization. Please call 413-447-2417 to register, ask for Sheila.

July 8 will be our annual York Lake Picnic. Watch for a possible date change due to weather. On that Wednesday, July 8, no one will be at COA at Town Hall basement. Please call Linda Riiska if you want to join us for the picnic. We usually sign up for various sides, salads, desserts, and drinks.

August 21, a Friday evening. We will have the representative of the home modification program back again. The entire town is invited to this important meeting. The home modification program enables those who are disabled to modify their home to make it easier to live there longer and safer. The loan is for up to \$30,000 and is not required to be paid back as long as you

own the home. Come to the meeting for more information.

In the works:

- A blood drive to be held at Old Town Hall
- Fire extinguisher usage and safety
- Safety in the home
- Salt and how it affects us

Anyone interested in taking a driver safety class? Five have signed up already. If we had more we could have the class here in Town. When completed this class allows you a discount on your car insurance. For information, call Linda Riiska, 258-4816 📧

Sandisfield Historical Society



By John Kuzmech

BILLY RIISKA, GUEST SPEAKER, JUNE 13

Some time ago Flora Rhodes, long-time Town Clerk, transcribed old town meeting minutes, a copy of which can be viewed at the Historical Society.


From those pages, thanks to Flora, we see that on March 19, 1764, there were eleven matters at the meeting, including hiring a preacher, building a school house, choosing a committee to seat the meeting house, and petitioning Connecticut General Assembly regarding a road through Colebrook. The 4th article was "to see if the town will build a bridge over Farmington River where the County road now is and grant a sum of money for that purpose."

The 9th article was "to see what the town will do respecting Swine running att [sic] large the year ensuing."

Issues prominent in our 2015 town meeting, such as snow removal and purchasing mechanical equipment, were not even on the horizon. But snow removal and equipment are not just modern concerns. Jumping forward 160 years in this thick volume that Flora transcribed, we see from the March 9, 1925 town meeting minutes that Article 11 was "To see if the Town will authorize the Selectmen to purchase a Cleveland Tractor for road work." Article #12 approved \$700 for same. And the "Opening of the roads in Winter" budget that year was approved at \$500.

Our next meeting will be Saturday, June 13, at 11 a.m. Our monthly speaker will be Billy Riiska, local logger and owner of Riiska Brook Orchard. Billy has lived in Sandisfield his entire life and will have a lot to say. His daughter, Bethany Perry, will interview him. It should be a great event. Potluck lunch to follow. All are welcome.

July 4th will be our Summer Fair from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Call me if, during your spring cleaning, you find items to donate for our Tag Sale. We have a lot of newly donated items from an estate for sale at this fair. Vendors for the Summer Fair should contact Marcia at 258-2898.

The popular Pet Parade, presented last year by the Arts Center, will be at our Summer Fair on July 4, 11:30 a.m. The Historical Society is pleased to partner with Teresa DellaGiustina and the Recreation Committee to sponsor the Pet Parade. Prizes will be given for best costumed and best dressed animal and other categories. All humans are welcome but pet owners should be leashed. 

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Aleksandra Maria Uzpurvis, daughter of Jean Atwater-Williams and step-daughter of Ronald Bernard of Cold Spring Road, graduated in May from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences University in Boston. The graduation ceremony, held at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, was the culmination of a six-year course of study leading to a doctorate of pharmacy degree for Ali.



Molly Hubbard, daughter of Patricia and David Hubbard of Dodd Road, was recently awarded a Masters Degree in International Environmental Policy from Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. Molly, a 2013 graduate of Middlebury College, is employed by SunEdison in San Francisco, a leader in alternative energy systems and distribution. Above, she is pictured with her brother, Ben, and her mother and father.



John Grammer, son of Mary Anne and John Grammer of South Beech Plain Road, graduated on May 28 from Harvard College. Graduating Magna Cum Laude in his field of Social Studies,

John plans to move to New York City after traveling in Europe with his girlfriend Lilli, also a Harvard graduate. John will pursue a career in public service.

Sandisfield Graduates Monument Mountain High School June 2015

Pauline Elizabeth Bakunis

Casey Ryan Carr

Stephen Michael Cormier

Robert Leigh Kahlstrom

Dru Martin Paspuletti

Comings & Goings



BRIDGER GENTRY BRAUN

Proud parents Charlie and Chelsea Braun of Tolland are pleased to announce the birth of their first child. The baby boy was born on May 8, 2015, at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington at 2:55 p.m., weighing 8 lb., 5.6 oz.

His maternal grandparents are Paul and Catherine Ferreira of Sandisfield. His paternal grandparents are Clifford and Valerie Braun of Chautauqua, New York. All four excitedly welcome him.



ALEXANDER HRYCKVICH

1926-2015

Alexander Hryckvich, 89, died peacefully on Tuesday, May 19 after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease.

A native and lifelong resident of Sandisfield, Alexander was born April 18, 1926, the youngest of four children of Frank and Mary Hryckvich.

He was a veteran of WW II and a member of the American Legion. He worked as a logger who ran a lumber mill in Sandisfield with his Brother Nick for over fifty years. He enjoyed gatherings and fishing with many friends and relatives.

Alexander is survived by his daughter Linda Fales and her husband Tenney of Egremont, two grandchildren, Alexcia Adams and her husband Paul and great grandson Andrew Tenney of Sandisfield; Alice Weaver of San Diego, Calif.; his brother Nicholas Hryckvich and his wife Doris of Sandisfield; his nephew Victor Hryckvich and his wife Nina; his nephew Frank (Bud) Hryckvich and his wife Sharon along with many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was predeceased by his wife of 64 years, Violet, and his sisters Ann and Laura and grandson, Justin.

A burial and graveside service will be on Saturday, June 13, 2015. at 11a.m. in the Sandisfield Center Cemetery.

Donations in memory of Alexander may be made to Elder Services through Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. Remembrances may be sent to his family through www.finnertyandstevens.com.



At press time, The Times learned of the death of Sid Pinsky, a longtime resident of the Town and friend to many of us. An obituary will appear in the July issue.



Where's Breakfast?

On a Thursday morning in April, location undisclosed, two healthy black-eyed fox kits emerged from their den. Secure your chickens.

Photos: Jeremy Lombard



A Beech Plain apple tree, estimated at 235 years old, in full blossom. If there is no late frost, there may be many apples this fall.

Photo: Ron Bernard.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Residents of Sandisfield

My sincere thanks for your support on Election Day. Running for office has given me the opportunity to meet so many of you, listen to your concerns and share your hopes for the future of our town.

I am committed to working hard to move Sandisfield forward in a thoughtful, fair and deliberate manner with you, the taxpayer, (and, importantly, a neighbor) as the primary motivation for decisions we make. I pledge to be transparent in all deliberations and available to answer your questions. I love our town and will do my best to serve it on your behalf and maintain its character and magnificent rural heritage.

My greatest hope is that I can make every one of you proud to be a resident of Sandisfield.

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South Sandisfield Road

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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

Please send notices for Now Hear This! to calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org.

JUNE EVENTS

Qigong for the Mobility Impaired on Mondays (June 1, 8, 15, 22) at 11:00 a.m. at Old Town Hall. \$2 donation to the Friends of the Sandisfield COA. Drop-ins welcomed.

Gallery Opening Reception on Saturday, June 6, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The Gallery will feature paintings by Steve Balkin. The Gallery will also be open during performances and each Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Andy Wrba and the Rotten Apples Concert featuring bluegrass and folk on Saturday, June 6, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. \$15.

Sandisfield Historical Society Meeting on June 13, at 11:00 a.m. at the Meeting House on the corner of Route 183/Sandy Brook Turnpike and South Sandisfield Road. Speaker will be Billy Riiska, lifetime Sandisfield logger and orchardist, followed by potluck luncheon. Information, John Kuzmech, 258-4906.

Dr. Evers Whyte: New Hope for Chronic Pain Lecture on Saturday, June 13, at 10:00 a.m., at the Sandisfield Arts Center. \$10.

Common Thread Concert on Saturday, June 13, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Three talented musicians with a range of folk styles. \$15.

Church Service on Sunday, June 14, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church on Route 57.

American Legion Pavilion, Flag Day, on June 14. Ceremony begins 6 p.m. Bring your old flags or give them to any Legion member for proper disposal. Ceremony to be shorter this year.

Democrats in Sandisfield, caucus, June 16, 6:30 p.m. at Old Town Hall to elect two delegates and an alternate to the 2015 Massachusetts Democratic Convention (September 19 in Springfield). Open to all registered Democrats in Sandisfield. Delegates will be divided equally between men and women, and ballots will be written and secret. Details on rules can be found at www.massdems.org. Information: Connie Canty, 258-4912

Center Cemetery Pruning Day on Saturday, June 20, 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. Bring pruning tools, saw, gloves. Coffee/sandwiches provided by Council on Aging. All are welcome. For information, call Kathie Burrows, 258-4943.

Two Hikes at Clam River Reserve.

Saturday, June 20, at 8:00 a.m. Forestry & Bird Hike.

Saturday, June 20, at 10:00 a.m. Hike in the Reserve. Two options: a walk of the 1.5 mile loop or the loop and a new route (2.5 hours total).

For both hikes, the terrain is mostly level and footing is excellent on the Loop Trail and good on the to-be-built

trail. Please wear sturdy shoes and long pants. Also, bring water and a snack. Meet at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road. Both hikes sponsored by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council.

Church Ham and Potato Benefit Dinner on Saturday, June 20, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. Tickets are \$12.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children under 12. Takeouts and tickets available at the door.

Sandisfield Players Explore Shakespeare on Saturday, June 27, at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, June 28 at 3:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. \$15 or \$5 under 12.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Otis Country Quilt Guild meets every Tuesday evening at 6:15 p.m. at the Otis Town Hall. All are welcome. For information, call Barbara Foley, 734-730-9389.

Artist Reception on Saturday, June 6, at the Otis Library from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. This event features the mixed media paintings by Stacey M. Schultze.

New England Live Swing Orchestra Dinner and Concert on Saturday, June 20, beginning with a picnic (on your own) at 6:00 p.m. at the Izaak Walton Field, Route 8, just north of the Farmington River Elementary School. This FREE event is co-sponsored by the Otis Cultural Council and Otis Community Day Committee. For information, call Diane Provenz (516-697-0549).

Tommy Whitefeather Tomahawk & Knife Show on Saturday, July 4, at Mountain View Campground (south of the Otis Town Center) on Route 8. Experience the language and culture (songs, dance, stories, and more) of the indigenous people of the northeast woodlands. Tommy Whitefeather specializes in the disciplines of knife and tomahawk throwing and is a current Guinness World Record holder. Free.

ONGOING EVENTS

Select Board, every Monday at 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Farmington River Regional School District, first Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Farmington River Regional School, Rt. 8, Otis.

Planning Board, second Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., Old Town Hall.

Board of Assessors, second Tuesday of the month, 5 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Conservation Commission, third Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Board of Health, first Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Old Town Hall.

Council on Aging, every Wednesday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Senior Center, Town Hall Annex. Potluck lunch at noon, bingo at 1 p.m. Free blood pressure screening every fourth Wednesday.

Finance Committee, second Saturday of the month, 9:30 a.m., Sandisfield Library.

Strategic Planning Committee, third Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Fire Station #2 on Sandisfield Road.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Thursday, 2-5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-12 noon; Wednesday evenings, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Phone: 258-4966.

Historical Commission: First Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Library.

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The Sandisfield Times is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

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